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Subject: **CAT student questions**
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Hi Annette and Chuck,

Enclosed are questions students submitted in response to the readings. I've also enrolled you, Chuck, for the blackboard course site, in case you want to see their essays & responses which can be found under "Communication" followed by "Discussion."

I'll pick up the videos tomorrow and aim to be at Louis 119 by 5:40. Looking forward to it!

Bernie

Questions:

1. What does the decline of the avant-garde film really mean for the film industry as a whole? How will its decline affect the ways in which people view films?
2. What can be done to perhaps inspire avant-gardes to stray away from mainstream film making that is based on the ideals of mass society, and to produce films based on their own principles?
1. Smith's essay was published in the late 1990s - who do you see as the important avant-garde filmmakers emerging in the years since then?
2. Do you agree with the idea of a "post-modern avant-garde", or do you think that postmodernism is instead robbing the avant-garde of its subversive nature?

Are there currently any famous film-makers that are considered to be avant-gardists?

Q2: Are films such as Fahrenheit 911, and Memento considered to be avant-garde?

Q: Where do you personally see the video vs. film issue playing into the future of avant-guard film? Q: There are many commercials being made today that are quite experimental and non-narrative. How do you deal with their status as an avant-guard form that takes on a purely commercial mode?

How do you feel the audience (or spectator) is thought of, are those relationships beneficial and if not, why not?

Questions

- 1) Is there a tangible difference between modernism and avant-gardism? Am I alone in my confusion of the movements?
- 2) How is post-modernism related to modernism? I took a class in French cinema and the term was juggled around (I even wrote a paper on it) but the more I learned about it, the less I understood it. Can you help clarify these movements or might they have been established to be not totally understood?
- 1) What do you think set film apart into a category in which it is critically evaluated for plot?
- 2) Do you see a feasible way to begin eliminating individual wealth as a means for the production of artistically driven films?
1. How does one reconcile the recent renewal of various forms through technology with the argument that form is the product of new social groups seeking an outlet? While this notion remains convincing in a historical context,

digital technology has had at the very least a strong correlation with a renewal of form in film and other mediums.

2. Why the obsession with naming and categories in the discussion of underground film? Is there simply no other convenient means of discussing the complexities of the art form, or does the complex but seemingly official taxonomy of film resonate with an effort to be heard as a collective of artists representing a singular idea drawing parallels to new forms as a means of expression for silenced social groups.

1) There are a number of recent movies that were released commercially, appealed to a (relatively) wide audience, and often had commercial budgets and effects teams, yet dealt with subjects traditionally confined to avant-garde film. Examples: *Pi*, *Memento*, and (I would argue), *Fight Club*. Does this indicate that avant-garde ideas and aesthetics are now integrated into the mainstream? If so, can they still be called avant-garde? Are the creators of these films compromising artistic integrity by incorporating cinematic elements with mass-market appeal, or do they simply have better marketing savvy than other avant-garde filmmakers? Do they (as I believe) represent a new trend in cinema that uses slick, contemporary aesthetics (normally reserved for lighter fare) as a vehicle to transmit genuinely deep content?

2) Along the same lines, how and to what extent does the context of a film (or any other artwork) alter its meaning? If a movie is first released in a museum, then in an indie film house, and finally in the general market, does its meaning change? Does avant-garde refer to the ideas presented or the film's role and perception in the community?

1. We have seen many films enter into popular culture recently that challenge societal values and structural norms in ways that Smith says avant garde cinema should. I am thinking of the work of *Mulholland Drive*, *The Passion of the Christ*, and *Adaptation*. And yet, I have trouble calling any of these films avant garde. What are your thoughts on mainstream cinema that challenges narratively and thematically.

2. I wholly disagree with the statement that cinema need not have become a narrative form at all, but could rather have modeled itself on other art forms, especially painting and music. (397) I would argue that a parallel to nearly every art form exists in video/film and is located in almost an identical of that societal sphere as its analogy. The only limitations on this have been technological (i.e. modes of dissemination), and we are currently seeing those eroded. What are your thoughts on this?

1. Are avant-garde films and other art forms now a moot point as the art world has begun to submerge itself more and more into the mainstream through the growth of technology and postmodernism?

2. Is it necessarily, as Smith asserts in this article, the responsibility or intention of avant-garde films to provide us with a pervasive self-conscious? Is this really what avant-garde has been since the beginning?